

But Time did beckon to the flowers, and
they

By noon most cunningly did steal away
And wither'd in my hand.

He seeks for peace; but, on earth, in vain:

Sweet Peace, where dost thou dwell? I
humbly crave,

Let me once know.

I sought thee in a secret cave,

And ask'd, if Peace were there.

A hollow winde did seem to answer, No:

Go seek elsewhere.

It is these notes of a pure and silver sadness,
like Christina

Rossetti's, not his porridge-bowl epigrams,
that matter.

He is unhappy, too, when he passes from the
wit of pro-

verbs to attempt a higher wisdom; to justify,
for instance,

the ways of 'Providence' in the poem of
that name.

Efforts to draw edifying lessons of divine
wisdom from a

universe that too often seems more like the
work of a

Leonardo da Vinci gone mad, are always
liable to end in

grotesqueness; but Herbert's evidence for
God's glorious

versatility from the crocodile's jaw deserves
to rank high

among such curiosities, both as science and
poetry:

To show thou art not bound, as if thy lot
Were worse then ours; sometimes thou shiftest
hands.

Most things move th' under-jaw; the Crocodile
not.

Most things sleep lying; th' Elephant leans or
stands.

This crocodile is worthy of Bernardin de
Saint-Pierre

himself, standing rapt before that Almighty
Wisdom

which made fleas black so that they might
the more

easily be caught. Happily Herbert realised
the danger of

metaphysics, as of metaphors. Wit and
wisdom alike in

the end he throws aside. His true language
is a cry. After

all, why should Christianity be made a
tangled subtlety?

*Love God and love your neighbour. Watch and
pray.*

Do as ye would be done unto.

O dark instructions, ev'n as dark as day!

"Who can these Gordian knots undo?"